

Division of Mass Transportation

Mass Transportation in California

Transit agencies are owned and operated by private, private non-profit, or public transit entities. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) does not own or operate any of the existing transit systems in the state and has no authority over individual transit agencies and their services. Caltrans, however, plays an important role in supporting the transit system by administering state and federal funds, such as the Federal Transit Administration's Section 5311(f) Program which supports the connection of transit services between non-urbanized and the larger regions. Caltrans also supports the infrastructure of the transit network on its state highway system to support a safe, reliable, multi-modal transportation network.

The California Transit Trend

Transit ridership in California is at an all-time high with 1.2 billion passengers annually. Transit operators provided 40% more services in 2007 than in 1997 and during the same time transit operating costs rose by almost 45% according to the National Transit Database.¹ Light rail trips increased at a higher rate than bus trips in the last five years, with bus trips becoming shorter and rail trips getting longer. In addition, California transit services accounted for 16% of the nation's vehicle revenue miles and hours. In 2006, California passed the first Global Warming Reduction Initiative with AB 32, setting in motion the need to reduce green house gas emissions (GHG). In 2008, SB 375 was passed directing metropolitan planning agencies to reduce GHG. The State has identified a number of strategies to reduce GHG emissions that emphasizes the use of public transportation and land use such as increased Transit Oriented Developments.

Transit Issues

Transit Connectivity

The transit system is faced with some gaps in connectivity. Many transit riders rely on different transportation modes to complete a trip. For example, as transit ridership has increased, the issue of providing passenger services for the first and last mile of trips has become apparent. Lack of connectivity to different modes of service could cause central transit hubs to be underutilized.

Transit Funding

Transit funding is a complex issue in California. There is a host of federal and State grants available to transit agencies for capital purchases, improvements and some operating costs. However, transit funding in California has recently changed as the state tries to resolve its fiscal issues. In the 2009 State Budget, State Transit Assistance (STA) funding was eliminated for the next five years. With the elimination of STA funds, transit agencies across the State have reduced their operating services. The federal government added additional grant money through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for transit projects to help sustain the economy, but this funding is temporary.

¹ NTD Historical Data File TS2.1, available at <http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/data.htm> accessed 10/22/09.) This information does not reflect any ridership variations based on recent statewide increased unemployment, furloughs and service reductions."

Statewide Transit Strategic Plan

To help the State better support public transportation, Caltrans is developing the Statewide Transit Strategic Plan (STSP). This effort, through coordination and collaboration with stakeholders, will provide the platform for Caltrans to understand common transit issues and identify solutions to reduce barriers. By recognizing how transit fits into the overall theme of integrating mobility choices into the transportation planning system operation, this plan will enhance Caltrans' transportation planning on a statewide level. The work will lead to the development of an action plan that enables Caltrans to facilitate the delivery of public transit services on the State highway system. The STSP will help California gain a better understanding of its present and future roles and responsibilities for public transportation — serving as the collective vision for California's future transit system.

INTERCITY BUS SERVICE IN CALIFORNIA



Legend

- Intercity Stops
- ≡ Passenger Railroad
- Greyhound Lines
- Amtrak Thruway Bus
- Americanos USA
- CA Shuttle Bus
- Lux Bus America
- Megabus
- Mt. Lassen Motor Transit
- Orange Belt Stages
- Transportes Intercalifornias
- USAsia Bus
- Other Connecting Regional Services
- 5311(f) Routes
- Urban Areas

